Historical Society of Palm Desert

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The Hourglass

Community
Service
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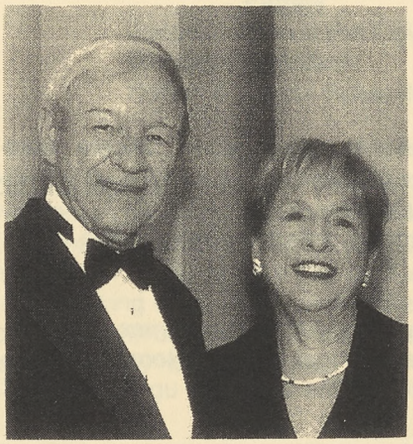
SUMMER 2008 VOL. 15, NO. 2

Founder's Day Award Recipients
Richard & Janice Oliphant

Edited from Society Archive by V. Folkers



During the past few years Dick and Jan Oliphant have received many awards here in the valley. These have come from local cities as well as non-profit organizations. So why did the Historical Society of Palm Desert choose this particular couple to honor on their annual Founder's Day? Was it because the Oliphants needed another plaque to hang on their wall? Not at all. Historically speaking, this couple and their five children have been on the scene since 1962 and were part of the beginning development of Palm Desert. They have consistently been major movers and shakers all over the Coachella Valley, and they have chalked up an impressive record of good will with over 60 grateful educational and philanthropic organizations.

Coming to the desert during the pre-development years was an advantage for Dick, because he was able to discover early on all the needs of the valley. Fulfilling obvious needs of people have resulted in outstanding successes since his graduation from high school. Police, fire and paramedic services were needed in the cove communities. He volunteered for many years with the Cove Community Service Commission which he founded in 1981. Oliphant has also been instrumental in the formation of various organizations that provide a base for the valley's cities to work together. The project which brought the Oliphant family to Palm Springs was called Palm City, and was later named Palm Desert Country Club. It was a "first" in California, a fully contained retirement city, and it won 17 national awards. Early impressions Dick had of the desert include: lots of wind and blowing sand, tin foil on windows, no places to shop for school clothes for the children, and no family restaurants.

After founding three major companies: Affiliated Construction, Oliphant & Williams Associates, and Oliphant Enterprises, which developed and constructed large commercial projects and built 6,000 homes in the desert, Dick handed over much of the work to two of his sons. Most of his interests as a developer were in communities which incorporated a golf course. Then he captured additional attention with the high-profile, state-of- the-art, Indian Wells Tennis Gardens. It is situated on 189 acres, has 20 tennis courts, a 16,100-seat stadium, and sports a price tag of $80 million.

The Oliphants have always supported educational (elementary, high school, college, and scouting) ventures. They feel that education and a good family background is a must in order to turn out positive members of the community. Dick has served on the advisory board of the California State University in Riverside. He was instrumental in bringing the World Trade Center University into Palm Desert. He describes it as "the university of universities" which will attract renowned university faculty from all over the world.

Dick's motto is: Community service is the price you pay for the space you occupy. With a marriage of well over 50 years under her belt, Jan has also adopted that motto which she applied especially to education during the time their children were in school. After founding PTAs in two of Palm Springs schools, she spent over 14 years as president of Marywood Country Day School's board of directors. Since then they have known many successes in their lives which have spawned another shared motto: Success is a road, not necessarily a destination.

The Board of Directors and the entire Historical Society membership appreciate the Oliphant's acceptance of their nomination to receive the Founder's Day award. We are proud to have them as Society members and as pioneers in Palm Desert's history.

FOUNDER'S DAY CELEBRATION

Saturday - May 17, 2008

This annual celebration took place in city hall's Council Chamber. Dick & Jan Oliphant were honored as the 2008 awardees for their exemplary efforts in serving the community during their 46-year residency in the valley. Many Society members participated in order to make this event a success. Barbara Keedy Eastes and her side-kick, Ann Tuttle, did much of the advance work. Yvonne Kelley, Bonnie Bowie, Warren Eastes, Bev Bergh, and Jean Hollenbeck helped set out and serve refreshments and did the cleanup. Dan Callahan ordered the recipients plaque and got it to the ceremony. Brett Romer loyally filled his roll as Society photographer. Dick Folkers made contacts with the Oliphants, the city, set up tables, and acted as M.C.

In spite of the climbing mercury in our thermometers, family and friends turned out to wish the Oliphants well. Jan and Dick both have the kind of personalities that welcome people with a friendly handshake and open arms. There were comments like, 'They've been our dear friends for years,' and 'They've done so much good here in the valley.' So another Founder's Day has passed by, but this one will not be forgotten.

SPRING LUNCHEON

Palm Desert Country Club

Chairperson: Beverly Bergh

Society President Dick Folkers welcomed everyone and announced upcoming events. New Board officers were presented:

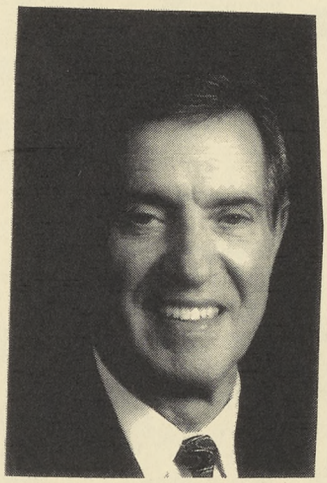
President: Barbara Keedy Eastes — Treasurer: Madonna Marman

Vice-Pres: Brett Romer — Secretary: Marcy Gregory

New members elected to the Board: Marcy Gregory Yvonne Kelley Madonna Marman Kermit Martin Eric Vogt

"Happenings at C.O.D."

John Marman introduced Jerry Patton, who became the new College of the Desert president during the summer of 2007. He was a marine in the military service. When he visited C.O.D. years ago in 1964, he was met by Brett Romer. Despite recurring problems with the public address system, Jerry did an outstanding job of catching the audience up on new and ongoing projects, as well as engendering enhanced community pride in our college.



Patton said that he is currently working on accreditation, which is an extremely important phase of his work. Also, the 50th year anniversary is coming up, and a big celebration is being planned. The nursing facility and the new Alumni Center, which was donated by Don & Peggy Craven, will open this fall. Three buildings for the Public Safety Academy are under construction. One of the new buildings will simulate fires for use by the Fire Department in training their men in new fire-fighting techniques.

A two-story classroom building will be part of the East Valley Campus. It will be located on a donated 100-acre site at Avenue 62 and the Union Pacific Railroad, near State Route 86 and Buchanan which is now a grape field. Classes are planned for the spring of 2009 using a portable classroom. It will be a very attractive campus with a book store, cafeteria, parking, and classrooms for 3000 Indio students. It will be built with a $109 million bond issue, and there will be a five-year transition. The West Valley Campus will be situated on 115 acres donated by Palm Springs and 142 acres donated by the Bureau of Land Management which is Indian land on the east side.

A strategic plan will have to include: An analysis of where we are now, where do we want to be, and how do we get there. We need to measure our performance to determine how we are doing in the following categories:

- Mission - Values - Strategic action - Vision - Goals -Success factors

Learning in the 21st century will be very different from what it has been from 1950 to the 2000s, because the skills don't exist now for the jobs of the future. Technology is becoming so advanced that people who know how to solve the problems will be needed. Presently, 97% of new C.O.D. students take remedial classes, which translates into low graduate and transfer rates. They need to work toward essential learning outcomes which include:

- Knowledge of human culture, and of the physical and natural world
- Intellectual and practical skills
- Integrative learning.
- Personal and social responsibility

Initiating the National Honor Society / Phi Beta Kappa should be of value in reaching these goals.

Dates for submission of articles for the Society's "Hourglass" newsletter are:

February 15 May 15 August 15 November 15

DOUG KEEDY -- FIRST BORN IN PALM DESERT

Taken from notes by Dick Folkers, Society President

On Sunday April 6, several friends, family and Historical Society Board Members were in attendance for the unveiling of a plaque in remembrance of the birth of Doug Keedy on April 5, 1947. The event was originally planned for last year when Doug celebrated his 60th birthday. Since Doug's parents were pioneers in Palm Desert, this celebration was very meaningful to Doug and his wife Sandy, as well as to his sister Barbara Keedy Eastes and her husband Warren Eastes. The plaque displays Doug's birth certificate and is dedicated to his parents, Robert and Gertrude Keedy. It has been hung at Society headquarters in the entry exhibit room.

Notice: If you or anyone you know is interested in purchasing an antique player piano, come to see it at the Historical Society. It plays beautifully!! The price is $500 (or best offer.)

NEW MEMBERS

Family

Judge Gordon & Pat Cologne
Richard Richardson
Robert & Carole Schaudt

Individual

Kurt Leuschner
Meg Whitcomb

DECEASED MEMBERS

Harold Derchan was born in Chicago in 1927. He was an electrical engineer who worked at Lockheed Martin Corp. for 25 years. He was a member of Toastmasters and the Coachella Valley Hiking Club. He served in the U.S. Army occupation in Japan and in the Korean War. He is survived by his wife Gloria.

Gerry Thibault was born in Springfield, MAS in 1932. He worked with Blue Shield in San Francisco and became president of a large Benefits Plan Adm. He loved architecture, design & music. Before moving to Palm Desert he served as Chair of the Architectural Commission in Indian Wells. He is survived by his wife Linda.

DONATIONS

Jim Walsh Book - Golden Anniversary (50 years) of Eldorado Country Club

Correction to Spring 2008 newsletter:

Peter Rittenhouse of Joslyn Cove Senior Center donated a framed aerial photo of the Desert Magazine Building under construction.

TOURS

Hal Rover gave a power point presentation on early Palm Desert to a group of 20 students (50 and older) from the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at California State University. Mary Jane Outcault Hill, who is a consultant for Education and Fine Arts at the University was responsible for bringing the group to Society headquarters.

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We are getting more requests for both school and adult tours, so we need more volunteers to help out. Also the cost of each student is $8.47; and some folks have sent in a donation already. Please thinks about being a supporter.

ONE-DAY YARD SALE

Chaired by Barbara Eastes, this mini-sale was held on Saturday, March 15 in addition to the Society's annual sale. There were a lot of tools and miscellaneous items available to sell. The Society netted $1,100 at this event. We extend many thanks to everyone who volunteered their help at this work-intensive project.

FALL YARD SALE

This two-day weekend sale will be held in early November. Keep in mind that we would like slightly used, saleable items.

4th FRIDAY SPEAKER SERIES for 2009

The Board has asked Hal Rover to work with the Joshua Tree Parks representatives in preparation for next year. This January through April lecture program has been very popular.

LECTURE: GENERAL PATTON & CAMP YOUNG

This talk by Jesse McKeever was attended by 18 members, 35 non-members, and yielded 3 potential members. Thanks to Hal Rover for moderating this interesting program. We are sorry that some people had to be turned away.

VOLUNTEER MEETING -- June 11

Hal Rover will present a training session at the firehouse museum on Wednesday from 10:00 a.m. till noon. This is a great opportunity to learn and support our Society's efforts.

B. J. CALLAHAN SCHOLARSHIP FUND

The Washington Charter School 5th grade students have submitted their essays for the contest, and they are being processed. Winners will be announced on Monday, June 9 at a 11:30 a.m. assembly. Society members are invited to attend. Please R.S.V.P. to Anne Tuttle at 346-6588.

LECTURE: DESERT WILDFLOWERS

From notes by Dick Folkers, President

Jon Mark Stewart is a professional Botanist who is currently the Living Desert's 'Curator of Gardens.' He has authored two books: Colorado Desert Flowers (and) Mohave Desert Flowers. With eleven inches of snow pack in the mountains last winter, desert flowers have been abundant; also the amount and timing of rainfall is critical to the wildflower blooming. The photos shown in Stewart's power point presentation were breathtaking. The desert washes were also covered during his talk, and advice was given about which plants and trees were suitable for Coachella Valley gardens.

SHADOW MOUNTAIN PALETTE CLUB

By Ginny Folkers, Curator

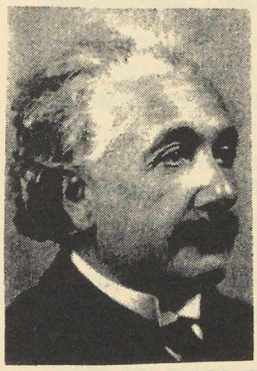
Do you sometimes think that certain organizations will last forever? That they will never leave the historic scene, because they are unique and they fill the creative desires of many people? That's the way I felt about the Palette Club. Knowing the early history of this club which began at the Shadow Mountain Club and involved Palm Desert pioneers, I admired its significance to the area. I even imagined that some day, when all of my curatorial work was finished, I would join them and paint beautiful desert scenes. The club officially closed its doors in April and though we may shed our tears, we will always remember it with fondness for its roll in Palm Desert history.

ALBERT EINSTEIN

Notes from an A & E Biography

During his lifetime, Einstein enjoyed visits to the desert....Palm Springs in particular. He was known as a great thinker and scientist; his genius was unrivaled. Born in 1879 in Ulm, Germany, his family moved to Munich when he was one year old. He was the eldest child in the family, and he was greatly influenced by a domineering mother who told him that Jewish people needed to work very hard. Albert was a natural learner and always stayed focused from his earliest youth. He learned to play the violin and at age 14 he taught himself analytical geometry and calculus. Despite these evidences to the contrary, Albert was thought to be a poor student (except by scientists.)

In 1896 while studying at a technical school in Switzerland, the good-looking 17-year-old was attracted to a young woman who was a student physicist. They were married young. He was not a successful father, and he gave up their first child, a daughter. All during his life he was torn between his wife and other women. It wasn't until 1948 that he actually divorced his first wife. In 1902 he got remarried, his first son was born, he had a job and decided to dabble in science on the side. By 1904 his life was in tatters, he had no job, an illegitimate child was adopted out, and his mate disappeared. In 1905 he wrote the first part of the "Theory of Relativity" and the second part he finished in 1916. His ideas forever changed the study of science, but he shut down emotionally and exhibited mental problems. He accepted a professorship in 1915, and he met and married Omega. Always a pacifist, he took part in anti-war activities in Germany, and finally collapsed in a state of exhaustion.



By 1919 he was free to marry Elsa, who was actually his cousin, and she was willing to put up with his many affairs with other women. It was at this time that his mind opened to new vistas as he studied a solar eclipse, he became a celebrity, and he bragged to his mother about his triumph. During 1921 he won the Nobel Prize in physics. In 1932 at the age of 56 Einstein was offered a lifetime professorship at Princeton, which he accepted on the condition that he could spend half of each year in Germany; but as a Jew, he was not safe in Nazi Germany, so he became a United States citizen in 1940. Elsa, his faithful wife for 17 years, became ill at age 60 and died in December 1936.

Einstein became famous for his ideas about the universe, some of which made possible the atom bomb, television and other inventions; but he never actually worked on the atomic bomb. America was in a race to build the atomic bomb, and then dropped two of them on Japan. He knew that Nazism was evil; and in 1939 Einstein was even thought to be a Communist. In 1955 he petitioned against atomic weapons and war. When he started exhibiting chest pains, he declined surgery and died at 76 years of age.

ANNUAL SOCIETY PICNIC

The picnic was co-chaired by Carol Cole and Barbara Keedy Eastes. Telephone work was done by Bonnie Bowie and Rose Romer. The traditional Keedy burgers with all the trimmings were prepared by the Keedy kids, Doug and Barbara. If you didn't attend the picnic this year, be sure to do so next year because it is an extremely enjoyable event.

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THE GIFT OF THE WILDERNESS

By Esther Shaak -- A Cahuilla Hills writer

Edited by Ginny Folkers

The boys loved to travel up Route 74, so Grandma would give them this special treat for their birthdays. First they stopped at the market for an emergency lunch. If we can't find a restaurant we like, we'll have a picnic with these sandwiches. The trio piled into the old car and headed up the bumpy road.

Grandma gave a running commentary as they made their way over the winding grade. She showed them how the vegetation changed from low desert to alpine or mountain. The rocks told the story of their origin at the bottom of the sea, and others were the lava of a volcanic explosion. There were huge rocks that had split because of the change from the raging heat in the summertime to the frosty temperatures during the winters.

The ancient haunts of the Cahuilla Indians were always interesting places where they could step into the past and discover how this peace-loving tribe survived when they were enjoying the cool temperatures in the mountains. They had special water holes used while they camped in various areas. Sometimes you could find secret steps that led to hidden caves. The squaws would weave beautiful and useful baskets that were used for all kinds of carrying tasks, and they even made fine hats.

Animals were a favorite topic with the children, so Grandma told the boys about the homes of the deer. For a few days after the fawns were born, they would stay under the shady trees where they were protected from the bright sunlight. The light coming through the leaves blended with the spots on their baby skin. They caught sight of some bighorn sheep high up on a rock that protruded from a flat mesa -- it was a ram with curved horns and two does. The creatures stood perfectly still, seemingly frozen into their pose. The male suddenly disappeared when they slammed the car door, but the ewes still stood like statues on the rock.

Note: The wilderness trip contained many other interesting facets, but we will save them for another time. Mrs. Shaak was the editor of Palm Desert News, an early local newsletter in Palm Desert's history. She sold her interest in the publication and it was renamed the Palm Desert Post.

PALM DESERT LODGE

The 32-room pink motel on Highway 111 was opened in the 1950s and an addition in the late 1960s made it a two-story structure. Unfortunately, when the land becomes more valuable than the business, demolition enters the picture...and so the place closed officially on April 1. Michael Noto, the owner since 1973, said he was glad that the city realized the difference between historic and nostalgic. The liquidation sale on eBay attracted Cary Ezell, an Americana collector from Huntington Beach, who paid $2000 for the familiar 12-foot neon sign. He will install it on five acres he owns in Joshua Tree. The 1.8-acre site will be used next for a Longs Drugs Store of desert contemporary design. Thanks to the city's Historic Preservation Committee, the motel got plenty of news coverage.

Note #1: Arbor Day and the Marian Henderson tree-planting celebration was tentatively planned for April 25. We are sorry to report that an over abundance of activities at the Society has caused it to be cancelled for this year.

Note #2: The next issue of the Hourglass will feature the biography of a very well-known pioneer. He was active in Palm Desert even before it was a city, and his story will refresh your memory and awaken your imagination about the good old days.

HIGH LIGHTS OF BOARD MEETINGS

From notes by Dick Folkers, President

Besides events mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter, many new and innovative fund-raisers were proposed at the **March** meeting. Sales of clothing, art, antiques, assistance at private yard sales for percentage, and even a dog show were suggested. Status of goals and objectives were given by Dick Folkers. Status of Palm Desert book was reported by Hal Rover. Under new business: grant info was submitted to the Seattle Foundation, changes made in the membership brochures order, and Eric Vogt would fix items found during the fire marshal inspection. A new donation of $500 to B.J. Callahan Scholarship Fund was given by Douglas Hanson; and attendance at Rotary's "Citizen of the Year" were discussed.

The **April** meeting financial report included designated donations, purchases requiring Board approval, receipt of $586 grant from Seattle Foundation, and the 501(c)3 status. Committee reports included additional e-Bay sales by Kim Houskin, luncheon needed raffle prizes, lecture #3 attended by 51 people -- check on Council Chamber & Community Room charges. Discussion of exhibits included need of Board approval for placement & expenses and the military display of Indio in main exhibit room.

During the **May** meeting the Board voted to sell cards containing historic pictures; the cost is $2.00 each or 6 for $10.00. Summer help is needed at the museum and all members are welcome; contact Anne to find out the dates we will be working. We would like to have each board member spend two days during the summer (July & August) to help clean, paint and organize for the Fall opening. Contact Anne to get scheduled. Remember "Many hands make the work lighter."

UPCOMING EVENTS

June 7, Sat.	University Park Community Dedication	north sphere	9-11 a.m.
June 11, Wed.	Volunteer Training meeting	Firehouse	10 am till noon
June 30, Mon.	Museum closed - July 1 thru Sept. 14	Firehouse	
Sept. 15, Mon.	Museum reopens		
Oct. 22, Wed.	Fall Luncheon	(?)	11 am
Oct. 26, Sun.	Golf Cart Parade		

Have a wonderful summer, either here in the heat of the desert or away from it.....your choice. Ginny Folkers, editor

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